



Envisioning a National System of Marine Protected Areas: A New England Region Public Dialogue

The past two decades have witnessed a dramatic increase in the use of marine protected areas (MPAs) as a conservation and management tool to protect the nation's most important ocean resources and areas. In response to this trend, Presidential Executive Order 13158 (May 26, 2000) directs the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National MPA Center to work with the Department of the Interior and other agencies and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive, integrated national system of MPAs for the benefit of present and future generations.

Since its inception in 2001, the MPA Center has been gathering the fundamental information needed to develop the national system in a way that will meet diverse conservation and sustainable use goals throughout U.S. waters by using the best available science and existing MPA authorities and programs. In early 2005, the MPA Center began to engage the nation in a participatory dialogue to develop the framework for the national system. Input and recommendations from stakeholders, agencies, authorities, and the MPA Federal Advisory Committee are cornerstones to the development of this guiding document. When complete, the framework will describe in straightforward terms the goals of the national system, as well as the processes for designing and implementing it based on sound science and broad stakeholder input.

In order to ensure that the national system fully represents the nation's interests in the marine environment, the MPA Center is holding a series of Regional Public Dialogues to solicit and collect input that will be used to develop the vision for the national system. Each Dialogue will begin with an overview presentation about the process for developing the national system and subsequently provide participants with the opportunity to break into small groups to raise questions, discuss relevant issues, and provide input on the vision for the national system.

The New England Region Public Dialogue is being held in conjunction with the May 17-19, 2005 meeting of the MPA Federal Advisory Committee, which is in the process of developing a set of recommendations for a national system. The focus of the New England Dialogue, however, is to provide the public with an opportunity to give their ideas and vision for the national system, rather than serving as a forum for commenting on the MPA Federal Advisory Committee's work. Those interested in providing comments to the Federal Advisory Committee can find meeting information at http://www.mpa.gov/fac/fac_meetings.html.

New England Region Public Dialogue

When: May 16, 2005, 7:00 – 9:30 p.m.

Where: Gulf of Maine Research Institute, 350 Commercial Street, Portland, Maine 04101
(RSVP required by Friday, May 6, 2005, due to limited space)

RSVP to: mpa.comments@noaa.gov

For more information on the national system and the New England Region Public Dialogue, please visit:
http://mpa.gov/national_system/